



MnGFOA Newsletter

April 2026

Excellence and Leadership in Government Finance

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President's Message

By: Tina Lannes

April is a unique time of year in our profession. We find ourselves simultaneously closing out 2025, monitoring the progress of 2026, and planning for 2027. It's a season that demands both reflection and foresight. With that in mind, we also look ahead to the National GFOA Annual Conference in Chicago, taking place June 28–July 1.

April also brings the joy of spring - Easter, renewal, new beginnings, growth, and hope. It's a time when many of us reflect not only on our organizations, but on our own personal and professional journeys. It prompts a simple but powerful question: How did I get here?

In my own exploration phase, a hotel management company offered me an internship that grew into a full-time role. It was an invaluable experience - but it also helped me realize that a corporate path wasn't where I ultimately wanted to be. During college, I was deeply involved in student organizations, and one unexpected opportunity introduced me to the field of information technology.

Back in 1997, I was invited by an electric company's internal audit team to attend a training called CanAudit. For three days, we learned how to hack systems, trace breaches using DOS, and detect fraud - this was in the era of dial-up internet. By the end, we joked that we could say, "Give me a wire in, and I'll take you down." That experience opened my eyes to new possibilities and reshaped my direction.

Mid-career, I joined a county auditor's office, where I progressed from deputy auditor to Finance Coordinator. A new opportunity eventually brought me to the Twin Cities as a Finance Officer, marking another major chapter in my life. During that time, I pursued my master's degree, started my family, earned Microsoft Server certification, and became involved with MNGFOA.

Now, as I approach the later stages of my career as a Finance Director, I can genuinely say I still enjoy the work I chose. A career is not a straight path - it is a lifelong process of growth and evolution. A mentor once told me, "Strive to always improve and keep learning new

things. If you don't, you won't be satisfied - or remembered." That advice has stayed with me.

Each stage of a professional journey brings its own challenges, opportunities, and goals. Understanding those stages helps us make better decisions aligned with our long-term aspirations.

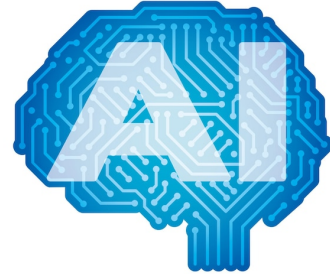
When I moved to the Twin Cities from Duluth, I left behind family, friends, and colleagues. It was a difficult transition, but I remain incredibly grateful for the mentors, peers, and friendships I found through MNGFOA. Their support, leadership, and encouragement have been invaluable.

To those who may be feeling ready for something more, I encourage you to explore new opportunities - whether through the Mentor Program or by joining one of MNGFOA's many committees. You may find, as I did, that those connections can shape not only your career, but your sense of community and purpose.



APRIL MONTHLY MEETING

Date: Wednesday, April 15, 2026
 Time: 12:00 PM – 1:00 PM
 Location: Zoom Meeting
 Cost: Free
 CEU: 1.0 on request. Please complete the online form to request an emailed certificate: [CEU Request Form](#)



Topic: Digital Readiness and AI in Local Governments

This presentation introduces the fundamentals of digital transformation in local government, explains how to leverage specific tools & technologies within finance & accounting processes, and highlights real-world use cases. It shows how implementing the right technology tools improves efficiency, accuracy, and employee experience, and outlines practical strategies for implementation, adoption, and staying competitive amid rapid technological change.

Speakers: Chris Knopik & Aaron Haataja

Chris Knopik is a principal at CLA and has more than 22 years of public accounting experience. He works exclusively with state and local government clients (including colleges and universities, cities, towns, counties, special districts, tribal governments, and state agencies) and has extensive experience with Uniform Guidance single audits of federal grant programs.

Aaron Haataja has been a dedicated team member at CliftonLarsonAllen (CLA) since January 2022. Aaron joined the digital team after spending 2.5 years with the assurance team. In his current role, he works primarily with state and local government clients to support data management, grants management, workflow automation, predictive analytics, and machine learning initiatives. Effectively communicating with clients to determine their everyday challenges surrounding data and helping to provide solutions to make them more effective and efficient are his top priority.

Membership Renewals

RENEWAL REMINDER

Annual Memberships expired at the end of February! All renewals must be done online at www.mngfoa.org. You may still pay by check by following the renewal steps online and then sending your check made payable to MNGFOA to the 2026 Treasurer:

Justin Juergensen, MNGFOA Treasurer
 City of Hutchinson
 111 Hassan St.
 Hutchinson, MN 55350

Justin may be contacted at:
 320-234-4256

Wanted: Day to Unite Captains

The MNGFOA is looking for volunteers willing to be a host site for the 4th annual MNGFOA Day to Unite on Wednesday, August 19th. We are hoping to add more locations and build upon the last three years! Please reach out to Hannah Lynch hannah.lynych@moretoncm.com and/or Nate Reinhardt nreinhardt@shakopeemn.gov

Thank you for your input!

After reviewing the results of the Program Committee survey, monthly meetings will stay on the third Wednesday of the month, but have a time of 12:00-1:00 pm to better align with the lunch hour and be cognizant of other meetings that start or end on the hour.

11th Annual MNGFOA Meat Raffle



Date: Thursday, April 16th

**Where: Broadway Bar & Pizza, Plymouth, MN
13705 27th Ave N, Plymouth, MN 55441**

Time: the Meat Raffle Starts at 5:30 pm.

Please arrive anytime from 4:30 and after.

You do not need to be there right at 5:30 pm. Join the fun as you are able!

RSVPs are encouraged for table reservation sizing but not required.
Please register on the [MNGFOA website](#) or email Bonnie Schwieger at bonnie.schwieger@abdosolutions.com.

Appetizers will be provided. Drinks will not be provided by the MNGFOA.
It'll be a vealy good time, we're sure it will meat your axepectations!



GFOA Leadership Academy and CPFO Program Informational Session – Save the Date!

Date: Wednesday, April 29, 2026

Time: 11:00 AM – 12:00 PM

Location: Wherever you are

Cost: Free

Please register online at www.mngfoa.org



Topic: GFOA Leadership Academy and CPFO Program (Informational Session)

Please join us for an information session on the National GFOA’s Leadership Academy and Certified Public Finance Officers program. The administrators of the program will provide you with what you need to know if you are considering these programs now or in the future and past participants will share their experiences.

GFOA Leadership Academy - Enhance your leadership skills and advance your career trajectory with participation in the immersive GFOA Leadership Academy at Arizona State University, Chicago or the College of Charleston. This weeklong training session provides ambitious public and government finance professionals an opportunity to bolster their leadership and management skills to better serve their communities.

Application for the program is completed through the National GFOA website at <http://www.gfoa.org/leadership-academy>. Visit the national website for more information.

GFOA's Certified Public Finance Officers (CPFO) program - is designed to **prepare individuals for leadership positions** in state and local governments by **enhancing fundamental skills** and **increasing knowledge** of best practices and standards in public finance. Individuals will be equipped to participate in decision-making efforts related to their government and community and lead projects and professionals in a substantive and significant manner.

The CPFO program supports the core beliefs of GFOA, including ethics, leadership and competencies in various finance matters and recognize members who have made the commitment to both obtain necessary knowledge and skills and remain current with industry best practices.

For more information on the CPFO program including the candidate guide, please visit: <https://www.gfoa.org/cpfo>

Scholarships!

We are excited to announce that we will be able to provide funding for three members to participate in the CPFO program (\$1,200 each) and two members to participate in the Leadership Academy (\$3,400 each). For more information or to apply visit the MNGFOA website.

Speakers: Chris Morrill, Government Finance Officers Association (Executive Director), Eric Roach, Government Finance Officers Association (CPFO Program Manager), Candi Lemarr, Apple Valley (CPFO), Neal Younghans, St. Paul (CPFO), Ryan Vadnais, Plymouth (Leadership Academy Graduate)



Save the Date for Spring Break Out Sessions – May 6th, 13th and 20th

Ride the financial wave at MNGFOA's Spring Break Out Sessions! Multiple in-person offerings featuring the next best thing to fun in the sun. Join us rain or shine for speakers on digital accessibility, AI chatbots, and software conversion followed by the opportunity to network with fellow attendees. Please register online at www.mngfoa.org

May 6, 2026 - 1:00-3:00 PM

Subject: Digital Accessibility and the Legislative Coordinating Commission

Overview: The LCC provides nonpartisan coordination of diversity and inclusion, accessibility compliance efforts, and written and spoken translation and interpretation services across the Minnesota Legislature for official legislative business. Regarding digital accessibility, this session will dive into what the legislature does, practices, helpful tools, approach, etc. As Minnesota's Chief Information Accessibility Officer (CIAO), Wyant works with state agencies to set policy, define best practices, design and implement strategies to change organizational culture, improve procurement processes, provide training, and organize communities of practice, all focused on ensuring that the State's information and services are fully accessible to its citizens and employees.

Speaker(s): Jim Melby (Legislative Coordinating Commission) and Jay Wyant (State of Minnesota)

Location: TBD – potentially Maplewood area

May 13, 2026 - 1:00-3:00 PM

Subject: AI Chatbots

Overview: A growing range of AI large language models—such as **ChatGPT, Gemini, Copilot, Grok, and Claude**—now offer practical, everyday value for local government accountants who need to work quickly, accurately, and with limited resources. These tools can help staff generate **complex Excel formulas**, build **RFPs**, draft **Council agenda items**, and produce clear, professional **emails and staff communications** in a fraction of the usual time. Because many of the most useful features are available in **free versions**, every finance professional can experiment with AI without needing special software or budget approvals. AI also supports statutory research, policy drafting, and audit preparation by summarizing long documents, checking for inconsistencies, and offering alternative wording that improves clarity. During the presentation, participants will see real examples drawn from common municipal finance workflows, highlighting both time savings and quality improvements. Audience questions, ideas, and live problem-solving will be encouraged to help everyone walk away with practical, ready-to-use techniques.

Speaker(s): Joe Rotz (City of Apple Valley)

Location: Albertville City Hall

5959 Main Ave NE

Albertville, MN 55301

May 20, 2026 - 1:00-3:00 PM

Subject: Software Conversion

Overview: Panel discussion including multiple city and county representatives and audit insights related to software conversions. We will discuss what went well, and what to avoid, as well as take questions from attendees for the panel to address.

Speaker(s): Tracy Thoma (City of Lino Lakes), Greta Pudas (City of Medina), Cory Kampf (Anoka County), Brandon Zabel (Carver County), Lindsey Meyer (Wright County), Troy Gabler (CLA)

Location: Lake Waconia Regional Park – Paradise Commons Sun Room

8170 Paradise Ln

Waconia, MN 55387

2026 MNGFOA Networking Events: SAVE THE DATES!

The Social Committee is excited to share a great lineup of networking events for 2026. Mark your calendars and join your colleagues for opportunities to connect, recharge, and have fun:

- **May 2026:** Cinco de Mayo event
- **June 2026:** Puttshack Edina event
- **July 23, 2026:** Lake Minnetonka Boat Ride
- **August 2026:** Service Project
- **September 22-24, 2026:** Attend the Annual Conference in Brainerd, MN with exciting networking events in store
- **November 5, 2026:** Service Project

JOB POSTINGS

Summary of Current Job Openings:

Position Title	Entity	Closing Date
Property Tax Specialist	Otter Tail County	April 2, 2026
Utility Billing Supervisor	City of Detroit Lakes	April 3, 2026
Finance & Accounting Intern	City of New Brighton	April 5, 2026
Finance Director	Arrowhead Regional Development Commission	April 12, 2026
Assistant Finance Director	Resource Renew	Until Filled
Administrative Support Seasonal	Metropolitan Mosquito Control District	Until Filled
Finance Director	City of Benson	Until Filled

Links and further details can be found on the [Jobs & Volunteering](#) page

2026 OFFICERS AND BOARD MEMBERS

President

Tina Lannes
City of Albertville
763.496.6802

At-Large

Dalton Larson
Anoka County
763.324.1755

President-Elect

Gina Foschi
City of New Brighton
651.638.2105

At-Large

Tyler See
ABDO
952.939.3230

Secretary

Joel Merry
City of Minnetonka
952.939.8254

State Representative

Sarah Rathlisberger
City of Monticello
763.271.3201

Treasurer

Justin Juergensen
City of Hutchinson
320.234.4256

Past President

Mark Ebensteiner
City of Becker
763.200.4250

EXCITING NEWS!

Congratulations to Jacob Seppelt at the City of Coon Rapids on completing GFOA’s Certified Public Finance Officer Program (CPFO).

Congratulations are also in order for Dave Wheeler at the City of Minneapolis for receiving the Lori A. Webster Scholarship to attend the GFOA Leadership Academy in Phoenix last month.

2026 Committee Chairs & Vice Chairs

Conference Committee – plans and coordinates topics, speakers, and all other aspects of the annual fall conference

Co-Chairs Jackie Heinz, City of Montrose 763-575-7435
Josh Kent, City of Buffalo 763-684-5465

Social Committee – plans and organizes social activities for the membership through the year

Co-Chairs Kari Carlson, City of Bloomington 952-563-8725
Michelle Hoffman, Minnesota Sports Facilities Authority 612-335-3513

Program Committee – plans and coordinates topics and speakers for the monthly meetings

Chair Hannah Lynch, Moreton Capital Markets 952-777-7930

Education Committee – plans and coordinates October accounting classes and other training sessions during the year other than the fall conference

Co-Chairs Brandon Zabel, Carver County 952-361-1938
Brent Foiles, City of Eagan 651-675-5018

Student Outreach Committee – The Student Outreach Committee is responsible for connecting with students to introduce them to career possibilities in government finance. Committee members attend career fairs and on-campus events, and also promote the John B. Lilja Undergraduate Scholarship.

Chair Dalton Larson, Anoka County 763-324-1755

Technology Committee – operate and improve the organization’s website and other technology

Co-Chairs Jeanette Boit-Kania, Ramsey County 651-266-8057
Joe Rotz, City of Apple Valley 952-953-2547
Janice Brandt, City of Coon Rapids 763-767-6442

Mentorship Committee – The committee helps engage our members in developing our future and the future of local government finance in Minnesota

Co-Chairs Cory Kampf, Anoka County 763-324-1751
Lynn Cornwell, Moreton Capital Markets 952-777-3227
Nate Reinhardt, City of Shakopee 952-233-9326

Please contact any member of the Board of the Committee chairs directly if you are interested in participating on any of the committees. Committee participation does not require a lot of time and is a great way to meet people and share ideas.

Message from the Editor

This is YOUR newsletter. If you wish to share items of interest with the membership, such as job openings, career moves, or retirements, please email them by the 21st of the month for inclusion in the next newsletter. Thank you!

Gina Foschi
MNGFOA President Elect
651-638-2105

